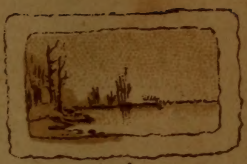
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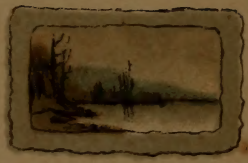





An
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An Indian Summer Reverie.



BY

James Russell Lowell.



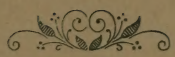


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What visionary tints the year puts on
When falling leaves falter through motionless air
Or numbly cling and shiver to be gone!
How shimmer the low flats and pastures bare,
As with her nectar Hebe Autumn fills
The bowl between me and those distant hills,
And smiles and shakes abroad her misty, tremulous hair!



How fuse and mix, with what
unfelt degrees,
Clasped by the faint horizon's
languid arms,
Each into each, the hazy
distances:
The softened season all the
landscape charms;
Those hills, my native village
That embay,
In waves of dreamier purple
roll away,
And floating in mirage seem
all the glimmering
farms.







The birch, most shy and lady-like
of trees,
Her poverty as best she may
retrieves,
And hints at her foregone
gentilities
With some saved relics of her
wealth of leaves;
The swamp-oak, with his royal
purple on,
Glares red as blood across the
sinking sun,
As one who proudlier to a
falling fortune
cleaves.





Below, the Charles – a stripe
of nether sky,
Now hid by rounded apple-trees,
between
Whose gaps the misplaced sail
sweeps bellying by,
Now flickering golden through a
woodland screen,
Then spreading out, at his next
turn beyond
A silver circle like an inland
pond –
Slips seaward silently through
marshes purple
and green.

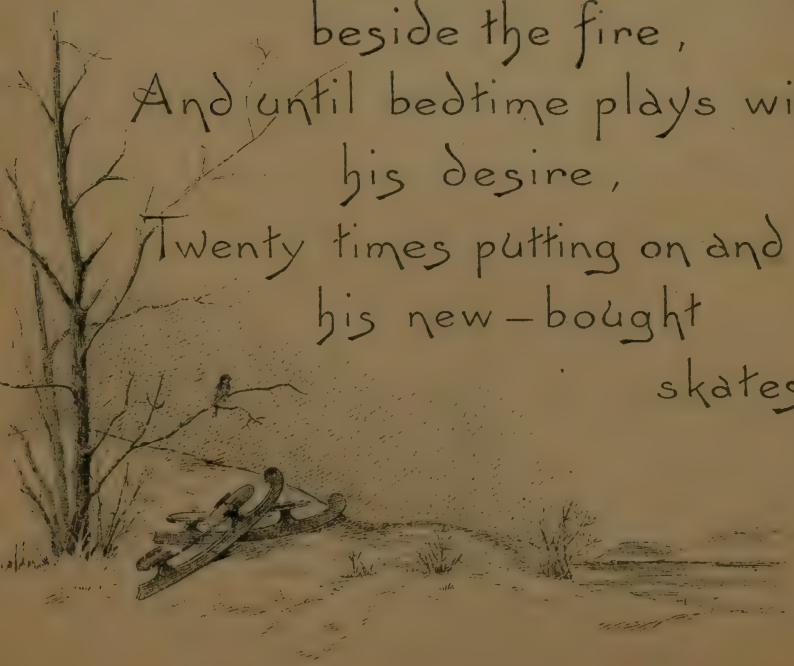


Meanwhile that devil-may-care,
the bobolink,
Remembering duty, in mid-quaver
stops
Just ere he sweeps o'er rapture's
tremulous brink,
And 'twixt the winrows most
demurely drops,
A decorous bird of business; who
provides
For his brown mate and
fledglings six besides,
And looks from right to left,
a farmer 'mid
his crops.

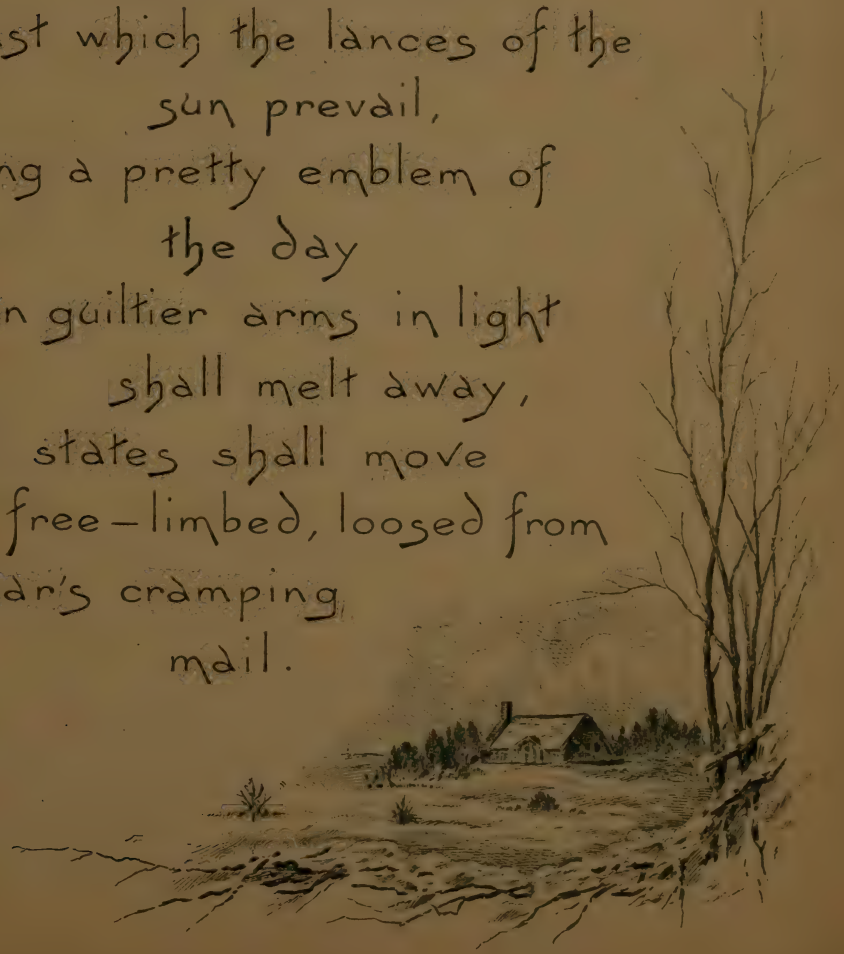




later, and yet are Winter
wholly shuts,
Ere through the first dry snow
the runner grates,
And the loath cart-wheel screams
in slippery ruts,
While firmer ice the eager boy
awaits,
Trying each buckle and strap
beside the fire,
And until bedtime plays with
his desire,
Twenty times putting on and off
his new-bought
skates,—



Then, every morn, the river's banks
shine bright
With smooth plate-armour, treacherous
and frail,
By the frost's clinking hammers
forged at night,
'Gainst which the lances of the
sun prevail,
Giving a pretty emblem of
the day
When guiltier arms in light
shall melt away,
And states shall move
free-limbed, loosed from
war's cramping
mail.



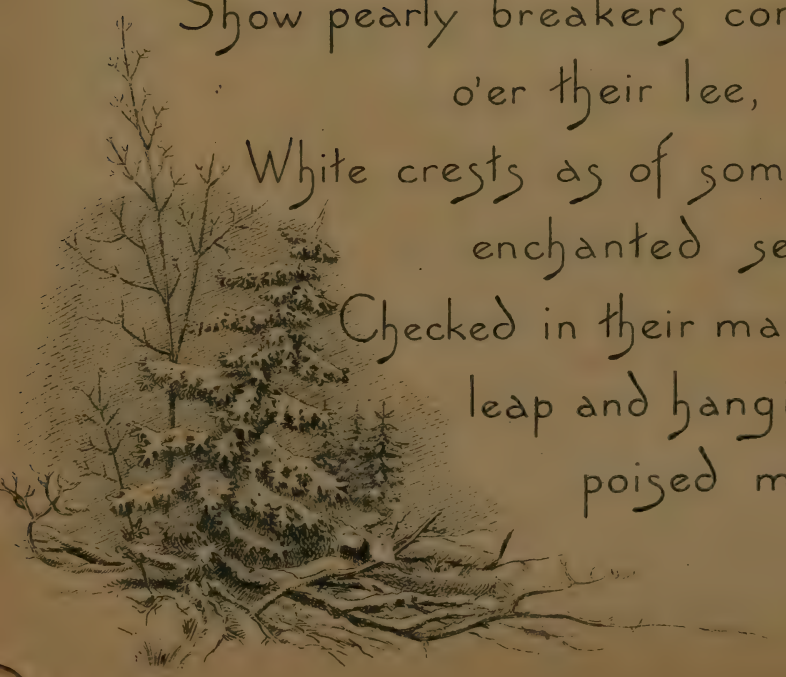
But crowned in turn by vying
seasons three,
Their winter halo hath a fuller
ring;
This glory seems to rest
immovably,—
The others were too fleet and
vanishing;
When the hid tide is at its
highest flow,
O'er marsh and stream one
breathless trance of snow
With brooding fulness awes
and hushes
everything.







The sunshine seems blown off by
the bleak wind,
As pale as formal candles lit
by day;
Gropes to the sea the river dumb
and blind;
The brown ricks, snow-thatched by
the storm in play,
Show pearly breakers combing
o'er their lee,
White crests as of some just
enchanted sea,
Checked in their maddest
leap and hanging
poised midway.





But let me turn from
fancy-pictured scenes
To that whose pastoral calm
before me lies:
Here nothing harsh or rugged
intervenes;
The early evening with her
misty dyes
Smooths off the ravelled edges
of the nigh,
Relieves the distant with her
cooler sky,
And tones the landscape down
and soothes the wearied eyes.
There gleams my native village,
dear to me,
How with my life knit up
is every well known
scene!










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